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Bassa language

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*For the Bantu language spoken in Cameroon, see **Basaa language**. For the Kainji languages spoken in Nigeria, see **Basa languages**.*

The **Bassa language** is a **Kru language** spoken by about 600,000 people in **Liberia** and 5,000 in **Sierra Leone** by **Bassa people**.

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Phonology [edit source]

Consonants [edit source]

		Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labial-velar	Glottal
Plosive	voiceless	p	t		k	k͡p	
	voiced	b	d		ɡ	ɡ͡b	
Affricate	voiceless			t͡ʃ			
	voiced			d͡ʒ			
Implosive		ɓ	ɗ	ɟ			
Nasal		m	n	ɲ			
Fricative	voiceless	f	s			xʷ	h
	voiced	v	z			ɣʷ	
Approximant						w	

- /ʃ/ can be heard as a glide [j] intervocalically within compound words.
- /ɡ͡b/ when followed by a nasal can be heard as [ŋ͡m].
- /h/ only rarely occurs.^[2]

Vowels [edit source]

	Oral			Nasal		
	Front	Central	Back	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u	ĩ		ũ
Close-mid	e		o			
Open-mid	ɛ		ɔ	ẽ		õ
Open		a			ã	

Bassa alphabets [edit source]

Further information: ***Bassa Vah script*** and ***Bassa Vah (Unicode block)***

It has an indigenous script, **Vah**, it was first popularized by Dr. Thomas Flo Lewis, who has instigated publishing of limited materials in the language from the mid-1900s through the 1930s, with its height in the 1910s and 1920s.^[3]

The script has been described as one which, "like the system long in use among the **Vai**, consists of a series of phonetic characters standing for syllables."^[4] In fact, however, the Vah script is alphabetic. It includes 30 consonants, seven vowels, and five tones that are indicated by dots and lines inside of each vowel.

In the 1970s the **United Bible Societies** (UBS) published a translation of the New Testament. June Hobley, of Liberia Inland Mission, was primarily responsible for the translation. The **International Phonetic Alphabet** (IPA) was used for this translation rather than the Vah script, mostly for practical reasons related to printing. Because the Bassa people had a tradition of writing, they quickly adapted to the new script, and thousands learned to read.

In 2005, UBS published the entire Bible in Bassa. The translation was sponsored by the Christian Education Foundation of Liberia, **Christian Reformed** World Missions, and UBS. Don Slager headed a team of translators that included Seokin Payne, Robert Glaybo, and William Boen.

The IPA has largely replaced the Vah script in publications. However, the Vah script is still highly respected and is still in use by some older men, primarily for record keeping.

Latin Bassa orthography [edit source]

Letters [edit source]

- A - a - [a]
- B - be - [b]
- Ḅ - ḅe - [bʰb]
- C - ce - [c]
- D - de - [d]
- Ḑ - ḑe - [d͡ʎ]
- Dy - dye - [d͡ʎn]
- Ɛ - ɛ - [ɛ]
- E - e - [e]
- F - ef - [f]
- G - ge - [ɡ]
- Gb - gbe - [ɡ͡b͡ŋ͡m]
- Gm - gme - [ɡ͡m]
- H - ha - [h]
- Hw - hwa - [hʷ]
- I - i - [i]
- J - je - [j]
- K - ka - [k]
- Kp - kpe - [k͡p]
- M - em - [m]
- N - en - [n]
- Ny - eny - [ŋ]
- Ɔ - ɔ - [ɔ]
- O - o - [o]
- P - pe - [p]
- S - es - [s]
- T - te - [t]
- U - u - [u]
- V - ve - [v]
- W - we - [w]
- Xw - xwa - [xʷ]
- Z - ze - [z]

Other letters [edit source]

- Ǻ - Ǻ̃
- ǻ - ǻ̃
- ĩ - [ĩ]
- ĩ̃ - [ĩ̃]
- ũ - [ũ]

Some Bassa speakers write nasalised vowels as an, en, in, on, and un.

Tones [edit source]

- á - [a˧]
- à - [a˨]
- a - [a˧˥]
- Ǻ - [a˧˥]
- Ǻ̃ - [a˧˥̃]^[5]

References [edit source]

- ↑ Bassa at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
- ↑ Bertkau, Jana S. (1975). *A phonology of Bassa*. Monrovia: Peace Corps.
- ↑ "Bassa language and alphabet" . *www.omniglot.com*. Retrieved 2020-02-27.
- ↑ Starr, Frederick. Liberia: Description, history, problems. Chicago, 1913. P.246
- ↑ "Bassa language and alphabet" . *Omniglot*.

External links [edit source]

- Omniglot: Bassa alphabet
- Bassa-English Dictionary
- Brief Summary of Liberian Indigenous Scripts
- Gbokpasom - Non-Profit ^[*permanent dead link*]

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*This article about **Atlantic–Congo languages** is a **stub**. You can help Wikipedia by expanding it.*

Categories: Bassa language | Languages of Liberia | Kru languages | Atlantic–Congo language stubs

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